



**JENNY LEONG MP**

**MEMBER FOR NEWTOWN**



**THE  
GREENS**

8 October 2020

The Hon. Brad Hazzard  
Minister for Health and Medical Research  
52 Martin Place  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister ~~Hazzard~~, *Brad*

**Re: COVIDSafe Protests**

I write to follow up on the question I put to you during Question Time on 5th August 2020 regarding the development of COVID-Safe guidelines for peaceful protest in NSW. I note that in your answer you made an offer to discuss the matter further.

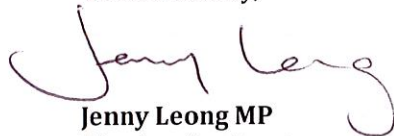
It is clear that conducting our lives within COVID restrictions will continue to be necessary in NSW for some time in order to keep our community safe. I commend the incredible work that NSW Health has done so far in providing guidelines to industries to allow them to continue operating in this difficult time. I respect that balancing the rights of people with the need for protecting people's health is a challenging one.

It is clear now that many areas of our society and economy have been able to establish a new normal, with guidance from NSW Health and support from government agencies. Unfortunately, this hasn't been the case with peaceful protest and community actions. People have the right to engage in peaceful protest and the three freedoms - the right to expression, assembly and association form an integral part of our democracy. Establishing an exemption for outdoor peaceful protest and community actions would recognise the importance of these human rights for people in NSW. Alternatively, creating COVID-Safe Guidelines specifically for peaceful protest would allow those in the community who wish to express their right to peaceful assembly to do so in a way that also ensures public safety.

In recent weeks, we have seen multiple incidents where activists have gathered in small numbers while maintaining physical distancing, but have still become the target of excessive policing. The size of these gatherings is in complete contrast to the crowds of people gathered at sporting matches or in shopping centres. It is vital that peaceful protest is not essentially criminalised in the name of public health orders during this pandemic.

I would welcome the opportunity to work constructively with you, your office or the relevant team in NSW Health to assist with developing a way for people to be able to protest in NSW without risking their safety or the safety of others.

Yours sincerely,



**Jenny Leong MP**  
**Member for Newtown**

